

Secretary Rusk Holds Press and Radio News Briefing at Houston

Following is the transcript of a press and radio news briefing held by Secretary Rusk at Houston, Texas, on February 26 preceding his address before the Texas Daily Newspaper Association.¹

Press release 197 dated February 27

Secretary Rusk: I have no prepared statement. Since time is short let's start with your questions.

Q. Mr. Secretary, what steps are being taken to prevent aggression or subversion in this hemisphere from Cuba?

A. The hemisphere has made it very clear that it will not accept any armed aggression out of Cuba; so that point is very clear to all sides.

The question of other steps with regard to Cuba involves a lot of action by a great many governments, both in the hemisphere and outside, to underline that Cuba must not become a source of infection for the hemisphere, to underline that Castro and Castroism will not be accepted as a part of the hemispheric system, that Marxist-Leninism must be eliminated from this hemisphere, that normal relations between the regime in Cuba and its neighbors cannot be expected. The reduction, for example, in

shipping and trade has been going on to such a point that both shipping and trade with the free world during 1963 will be the smallest fraction of what it had been, and it will be of insignificant importance. Both individual and joint action in the hemisphere by governments with respect to subversive threats is now being taken.

We are, of course, as the President has indicated, very much interested in the continued outmovement of these Soviet forces. In October and November the missiles and bombers were removed; certain equipment was removed at that time. It has been indicated that several thousand additional Soviet forces will be removed between now and the middle of March. So we are watching all that with very great concern.

But this presence in the hemisphere cannot be accepted as a matter of policy by the hemisphere, and steps will be taken to underline that and to give it force and effect.

Q. Does this mean then, with Castro trying to export his revolution to some other Latin American countries, if we know that arms are coming from Cuba directly to support these clandestine revolutions, the U.S. and the OAS [Organization of American States] will take action?

¹ See p. 383.

Now, no one elected us to that position. This resulted from the way in which nuclear weapons developed during and after World War II.

Now, if the allies in Europe wish to suggest any amendments, then we would be perfectly glad to look at what their suggestions would be with respect to such a thing as a multilateral force. So there are a number of these details that have not yet been answered, won't be answered, can't be answered until we see what our allies think about it.

By the way, may I make just a comment about the piece of paper that was distributed? This will bear a reasonable resemblance to what I expect to say tonight. But I will speak from it quite freely. So please don't feel let down if I don't say exactly what is on that piece of paper. And I will say some additional things at the time.

Q. Mr. Rusk, on that same subject, President de Gaulle has emphatically rejected the idea of this NATO nuclear force. In the speech that you may be ready to scrap, I think before that you implied, sir, that the United States was ready to go ahead without France. Now, a week ago, you said that they would have the problem of making the decision of when to fire.

Would the NATO allies, including the United States, make this decision without France, if the occasion arose?

A. First, I did not intimate I was going to scrap the notes I passed out. I just said that would not be an exact replica of what I planned to say.

Secondly, President de Gaulle has said thus far that France does not plan to join the multilateral force. He has not said that he will oppose it if the other members of NATO wish to organize such a force. And I think that the question of how the alliance makes the decision to go to war is a question of overriding importance, because this means nothing less than that. And I think in such decisions France would indeed play a very important part.

Q. Mr. Secretary, what do you say to those critics who say that the administration hasn't been vigorous enough in demanding the removal of Soviet forces from Cuba?

A. Well, I think this is a matter which has

to be worked out with full recognition, not only of the objectives in view but of the means to be used in getting them out.

These are very serious and dangerous matters. The President last October met a very dire threat with the most vigorous action. The situation was filled with danger at that point.

I think one of our objectives must be to protect our vital interests by peaceful means, if possible, rather than through a mutual conflagration. But that does not mean that we shall not work continuously at the protection of our vital interests, and if great dangers occur again they will be met with whatever is necessary.

Sino-Soviet Split

Q. Mr. Secretary, what is your appraisal of the split between Russia and Red China?

A. Well, I have always been rather cautious about drawing conclusions from that split, partly because I am not at all sure that either Moscow or Peking fully understands what that split is all about and how far it will go.

As you know, there have been some reports in recent days that the Soviets and the Chinese might be having some discussions to see what might be done about their own relations.

The argument between the two seems to be very far-reaching, going to such ultimate questions as the leadership of the Communist bloc and the basic methods and techniques by which —through which to push the world revolution.

I think the differences are serious, but I don't believe they have come to a point where there is a split in the bloc that could in itself benefit the free world by a fractioning of the Communist forces against which we are arrayed.

Q. Mr. Secretary, we have heard reports that the President already had your successor picked out. Do you have any plans to leave the Cabinet? (Laughter.)

A. Well, any Cabinet officer serves at the pleasure of the President, the same having consented (Laughter.), and that is a matter, of course, that is entirely in the hands of the President. There has been no discussion of that, and I have no plans.

Q. Mr. Secretary, does the United States

...hare any definite program for ridding Cuba of communism—and Castro?

A. Yes, I have already talked about six or eight elements in that program. I don't think that I need to repeat those here. But perhaps in the course of the next 2 or 3 weeks there will be enough debate on the subject to clarify it.

Q. Mr. Secretary, what about talks with the Turkish Government on the new missiles and the replacement with the Polaris submarines?

A. We have had a very good and cooperative reaction, because this is a part of a modernization program that has been going on for some time in a variety of ways.

This affects not only the Jupiters and Polaris, for example, but—and in Turkey—but it affects missiles in other countries, both tactical and airborne. It affects aircraft. It affects conventional weapons. This is something that has been on the way for a long time and has been discussed with the Turkish Government about 2 years ago. So this I think comes as no surprise to anyone, and the Turkish Government has been very cooperative.

Q. Mr. Rusk, have you seen the film "Katanga, the Untold Story" that is showing just now in the hall?

A. No, I haven't.

Q. It's a striking film. You would enjoy seeing it. You would be enlightened. (Laughter.)

A. Well, I think that there will be a good many shows about Katanga some day.

The Western Alliance

Q. Is Mr. de Gaulle encouraging us to withdraw some of our troops, and are we likely to reduce them soon?

A. No, he is not encouraging us to do so, and as a matter of fact I think it's quite clear that President de Gaulle recognizes that the Atlantic alliance, that is, the connection between the United States and Western Europe, is vitally important for the defense of the West, and he was not in any way indicating that that alliance should be broken up. Because the alliance was formed for the purpose of confronting the threat from the East. That threat continues,

and the defense of Western Europe and the United States are therefore linked in such a way as not to permit them to be separated or broken.

Q. What has this country, sir, accomplished in the way of building up foreign relations to overcome some of the good will that we have recently apparently lost to some other countries—France, Canada, for example?

A. Well, I think the alliance, the Western policy, will continue to move forward.

What happened in Europe was a decision on the part of France not to go forward in the first part of this year with the British membership in the Common Market.

Now, one can read a lot of things into that, but my own guess is that that is not going to change the mainstream of Western policy, either in the eyes of Europeans or in the eyes of North Americans, and that this mainstream of policy may continue. It may take certain different forms on particular questions, in, particularly, the economic field, but on defense matters, on trade across the Atlantic, relations between the West and the underdeveloped world, I think there is no shock that will be significant.

Q. Since our American fliers in Viet-Nam have been given permission now to shoot before they are shot at, does this indicate any change in our position with regard to that little war?

A. I think the situation there remains that we are trying to give maximum support to the forces of South Viet-Nam to put them in a position to win their war. That has involved logistics support, a higher degree of mobility, and that means the protection of our own forces in the event of an attack.

There has been some shooting; there will be shooting. But the basic struggle there is between the South Vietnamese and the Viet Cong, with a lot of help from the United States.

And we are encouraged to believe that some corners are being turned there and some signs of steady improvement.

Q. Mr. Secretary?

A. Yes.